

THE PROBLEM OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IN
SOUTH KOREA

- I. Under recent amendments, Vice President Ham Tae-yong will fill Rhee's unexpired term. Ham's vacancy filled by election.
 - A. Probable that initial orderly transfer to Ham will occur, with struggle ensuing for Vice Presidency. Some violence possible among VP contenders in pre-election period.
 - B. Since Ham 85, in ill health, new VP will be in position control Ham's prerogatives and influence outcome of August 1956 presidential election through control of police and Liberal Party mechanism.
- II. There are elements of instability, such as uncertainty what constitutes vacancy in event Rhee incapacitated. Also,

National Assembly may declare 1952 and 1954 constitutional amendments invalid and attempt regain right to elect President.

III. Yi Ki-pung, speaker of the legislature and chairman of Liberal Party central committee, is in strong political position for vice-presidency.

- A. Yi's power derives from Rhee's authority; subject to change at any time.
- B. Anti-Yi Ki-pung leaders such as Yi Kap-song also maneuvering to succeed Ham, possibly in collaboration with Yi Pom-sok's National Youth Group.
- C. Former Prime Minister Yi Pom-sok also maneuvering to succeed Ham, playing watchful game but supporters mostly out of power.

IV. Military unlikely intervene unless political situation gets out control. Military leaders can be influenced significantly by US military officials. Less likely provoke coup while under UNC operational control.

A. C/S Chong Il-kwon has strong political ambitions, has cultivated American favor, and is in good tactical position; JCS Chief General Yi Hyong-kun also ambitious; First Army Commander Gen. Paek Son-yop not politically inclined.

V. Situation could change rapidly, since Rhee traditionally clips wings of leaders who acquire too much power.

A. Liberal Party convention in March will be good indicator of factional strengths.

B. Important US preference not be

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indicated. In Gen Taylor's words:

" I hope the heir-apparent does not
become apparent."

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